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## AN EXCITING EPISODE OF THE EARLY '60s.

BY H. D. BARROWS.

The picturesque mountain valley known as Santiago canyon, in Orange county, is located within the range of mountains between the Santa Ana and San Juan valleys on the south and El Chino ranch and Jurupa on the north. It is several miles wide and perhaps twenty miles long, and is drained by Santiago creek, which finds its outlet in the Santa Ana river, not very far from the old Yorba homestead. The Yorba and Peralta families, whose forebears originally came from Spain, were the former owners of both the Santiago and Santa Ana ranches.

Teodosio Yorba was the ancient owner of the Santiago ranch, who sold it to William Wolfskill, and he sold, I believe, to Flint, Bixby & Co. It is now owned by the James Irvine estate. Of course the Yorba grant includes only a limited portion of the extensive Santiago canyon. Years ago, mining was carried on, in what is known as the "Silverado" branch of Santiago. Not very far above the mouth of the canyon there is one of the most beautiful natural parks to be found anywhere. It is as level as a house floor, and is densely shaded by evergreen live-oaks that must be five hundred years old, more or less, with plenty of living springs of pure mountain water near by. It is an ideal place for picnicking parties, and was resorted to by them extensively in former years when it was widely known as the "Picnic Grounds" of the Santiago. J. E. Pleasants was one of the first settlers of the valley, and he still resides there. He and others had bee ranches ten or twelve miles above the Picnic Grounds in the '70s and '80s. He named his place "Refugio" (Refuge, or place of rest) after his deceased wife. Later, this place became the home of Mme. Modjeska and her husband, Count Charles Bozenta Clapowski, who have enlarged, improved and beautified it, creating a lake for irrigation, thus establishing for themselves a romantic and luxurious mountain retreat, which they have felicitously named "Arden," and which, in fact, is no unworthy nor unlike counterpart of that "Arden" of Shakespeare's idyllic masterpiece.

Away back in the early '60s a very exciting episode occurred at a point about three miles above the picnic grounds, in which Mr. Pleasants, who had charge of a stock ranch at the time, was

an active though involuntary participant. One Sunday morning he was out looking after stock, when he found three Mexicans in the corral at the point referred to, catching his tame horses. Supposing them to be vaqueros of his neighbors, lassoing their own horses, he rode up to the corral, when one of the men rode toward him in a friendly manner, and when he came alongside held out his hand as if to shake hands, saying, "Como le va, amigo?"—when, suddenly drawing his pistol, he pointed it at Pleasants' head and fired. Pleasants threw up his right hand and turned the pistol aside at the moment of discharge, and the ball passed through that hand, disabling it entirely, the scar of which remains to this day. Grasping his own pistol with his left hand, Pleasants commenced firing at his assailant. He had, however, only five charges in his pistol (having previously discharged one shot at a rabbit), whereupon, at his first shot, the other two men fled.

The battle was now on in earnest. The leader fired six shots at Pleasant, but, firing somewhat wildly, two shots entered Pleasants' saddle, one passing through it; when he (the leader) also fled. He evidently kept the run of Pleasants' shots, each firing, one after the other, and when his six shots were exhausted he must have thought that Pleasants still had another shot, for he incontinently fled, after Pleasants had fired his last shot, thus leaving Pleasants master of the field—with an empty pistol! And thus ended a fierce battle, with Pleasants as the victor, although he had been at a big disadvantage; he had been taken at the start entirely by surprise; he was one man against three; he had only five shots to his enemy's six; his right hand was disabled at the outset, whereby he was compelled to make the fight only with his left hand. A man who could come off victor in a desperate encounter like that must have some "sand." Mr. Pleasants has resided in beautiful Santiago canyon ever since that memorable adventure, which occurred over forty years ago. Some five years before that time, or in 1857, Juan Flores, the leader of the formidable robber band which murdered Sheriff Barton and several members of his posse, near Capistrano, was captured on the top of one of the highest mountains of the Santiago range and brought to Los Angeles and hung by the people on the side of the hill not far from our new county jail. It is needless to say that there is no place in either Los Angeles or any county where more peace and quiet prevails, nor where life and property are more secure, in recent years, than in romantic Santiago canyon.